
U.S. Assistance to Colombia and the Andean Region

By

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Colombia matters to the United States. Congress has been a key partner in our efforts to help Colombia defend its democracy from the demons of narcotrafficking, underdevelopment, human rights abuses, and terrorism.

Many of you have traveled to Colombia. I thank you for your engagement. For those who are considering travel to Colombia, I urge you to go. There is no better way to understand the commitment of the Colombian people to defending their democracy. Your visits make clear everything America stands for democracy, security, and prosperity, in the U.S. and in Colombia.

I also thank you for the bipartisan consensus shown in House resolution 358, passed after President Pastrana's February 20 decision to end the former demilitarized zone; your appropriation last January of funds to carry out the *Andean Counterdrug Initiative*; and your approval of the *Plan Colombia Supplemental* in July 2000. We support your action on the *Andean Trade Preferences Act*, and hope that the Senate will soon enact it into law.

On March 21, 2002 the Administration asked the Congress for new authorities. The terrorist and narcotics problems in Colombia are intertwined. These new authorities would allow us to:

- Address the problem of terrorism in Colombia as vigorously as we currently address narcotics;
- Help the Government of Colombia address the heightened terrorist risk that has resulted from the end of the demilitarized zone.

New authorities would not mean that we would stop our human rights vetting of all Colombian military units receiving U.S. assistance or that we would exceed the 400 person cap on U.S. military personnel providing training in Colombia, nor the 400 person cap on U.S. civilian contractors. The U.S. believes that these new authorities will give us the ability to help the Government of Colombia address the multi-faceted threats to its security, democracy and prosperity. I look forward to discussing this proposal with you.

Hemispheric Vision: Democracy, Prosperity and Security

The United States can be proud of the hemispheric consensus in favor of democracy, rule of law and human rights, open markets and social progress. Our leadership has been essential to creating and promoting this consensus, which was ratified at the Quebec City Summit of the Americas last April. At that Summit President Bush said:

“We have a great vision before us: a fully democratic hemisphere, bound together by good will and free trade. That is a tall order. It

is also the chance of a lifetime and it is the responsibility we all share.”

At Quebec, thirty-four democratically-elected heads of state and government agreed on:

- A democracy clause which makes democratic government a requirement for participation in the summit process;
- A 2005 deadline for the Free Trade Area of the Americas;
- An approved action plan to promote economic prosperity, protect human rights, and fight drug trafficking and organized crime.

There is no more important, or more challenging task than building responsive democratic institutions, competitive markets, effective legal systems and sound educational and social systems throughout the hemisphere. In many countries it will take years to overcome decades of protectionist economic policies, military misrule and lack of social investment. However, as President Bush recently said,

“A dream of free markets and free people, in a hemisphere free from war and tyranny. That dream has sometimes been frustrated - but it must never be abandoned.”

This hemispheric dream of democracy, prosperity and security for every citizen, presented by President Bush, faces its most difficult challenge in the hemisphere’s second oldest democracy, Colombia. What good will these principles be if they are trampled in Colombia?

Colombia: Assault on Democracy

Colombia’s forty million inhabitants and its democracy are under assault by three narcoterrorist groups; the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The three groups with a combined force of over 25,000 combatants, regularly engage in massacres, kidnappings, and attacks on key infrastructure. The United Nations believes that as many as 6,000 of the FARC’s combatants are under 18 years of age. The FARC and AUC are involved in every facet of narcotics trafficking, including cultivation, processing, and transportation. The income they derive from narcotics is estimated at over \$300 million a year and has been key to their expansion, both in numbers and armament over the last ten years. All three groups seek a lawless, anarchic environment in which they can prey on innocent civilians and legitimate business activities.

The terrorist assault on Colombia’s democracy saw the AUC kill two Colombian legislators over the last twelve months, while the FARC kidnapped six Colombian legislators, including presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt. The three terrorist groups assassinated twelve mayors in 2001. FARC efforts to disrupt the March 10 legislative elections failed, but the terrorist group will undoubtedly try to interfere with the May 26 presidential elections as well.

Colombia: Assault on Prosperity

The National Liberation Army and FARC bombings of the key Caño Limó oil pipeline cost the Government of Colombia almost \$500 million in lost revenue last year, equal to almost one-third of Bogota’s spending on health for its citizens. FARC strikes against the country’s power grid in February left forty-five towns, including two departmental capitals, without electricity for days. The FARC also attempted twice to blow up a dam near Bogota, actions which, if successful,

could have killed thousands of civilians. Fortunately, Colombian security forces thwarted both attempts.

The FARC and ELN also represent a danger to the \$4.3 billion in direct U.S. investment in Colombia. They regularly attack U.S. interests, including the railway used by the Drummond Coal Mining facility and Occidental Petroleum's stake in the Caño Limó oil pipeline. Terrorist attacks on the Caño Limó pipeline also pose a threat to U.S. energy security. Colombia supplied 3 percent of U.S. oil imports in 2001, and possesses substantial potential oil and natural gas reserves.

Colombia: Assault on Security

Terrorist attacks on Colombia's security have resulted in saw over 3,000 Colombians killed in 2001. Another 2,856 were kidnapped, with the ELN, FARC and AUC responsible for almost 2,000 victims. Among the kidnapped victims were 289 children, the youngest of whom was only three years old.

The Colombian authorities' arrest of Brazilian narcotrafficker Luis Fernando da Costa in April 2001 at a FARC military camp confirmed extensive FARC involvement in the drug trade, and led to the recent U.S. indictment of the Commander of the FARC's 16th front on drug-related charges.

In the former demilitarized zone, the Colombian military recently found two large FARC-run cocaine laboratories and 7.4 metric tons of cocaine. Similarly, AUC Commander Carlos Castaño has publicly admitted that the AUC obtains 70 percent of its income from narcotics. FARC and AUC activities in southern Colombia have been a major obstacle to our aerial eradication and alternative development programs, especially in Putumayo and Caqueta.

The FARC, ELN, and AUC also threaten regional stability. The FARC regularly uses border regions in Panamá, Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela for arms and narcotics trafficking, resupply operations, and rest and recreation. Conflicts between the FARC and AUC in northwest Colombia have led to limited refugee inflows into Panamá's Darien region. Venezuela and Ecuador have experienced similar problems. The insecurity created by the FARC, AUC, and ELN creates a haven for criminal activity that affects Colombia's neighbors.

Since 1992, the FARC and ELN have kidnapped 51 United States citizens and murdered ten. The threat also carries into the United States. Illegal drugs caused 50,000 drug-related deaths and \$160 billion in economic losses in the United States in 2000. Colombia supplies 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the U.S., and it is estimated that approximately 60 percent of the heroin entering the U.S. is of South American origin, which is primarily Colombia. It is also a significant source of heroin.

Colombian: Response to Growth in Terrorist Violence

In 1999, President Pastrana took the initiative in responding to the crisis undermining Colombia's democracy, prosperity and security with the launch of the six-year, \$7.5 billion Plan Colombia. This plan recognized that Colombia's narcotics, political, terrorist and economic problems are interrelated, creating a vicious downward cycle. To break these links, it called for substantial social investment, judicial, political and economic reforms, modernization of the Colombian armed forces, and renewed efforts to combat narcotrafficking. Pastrana also began peace talks with the FARC, providing the group with a 16,000 square mile demilitarized zone to facilitate negotiations. At the same time, he sought to improve ties with the U.S.

U.S. Support for Plan Colombia

The United States shares Plan Colombia's vision of a democratic Colombia free from the scourges of narcotics and terrorism. Support has been a key component of the plan. With your support, since July 2000, the U.S. has provided Colombia with \$1.7 billion to combat narcotics trafficking and terrorism, strengthen democratic institutions and human rights, foster socio-economic development, and mitigate the impact of the violence on Colombian civilians. Our assistance to Colombia using Plan Colombia funds is limited to support of counternarcotics activities.

Take our focus on counternarcotics activities aimed at breaking the financial support of the narcoterrorist groups. The Government of Colombia extradited twenty-three Colombian nationals to the U.S. in 2001, an unprecedented level of cooperation. We trained, equipped, and deployed the Colombian Army's counternarcotics brigade, which destroyed 818 base laboratories and 21 HCL laboratories, and provided security for our aerial eradication operations in Southern Colombia. Operating as part of a Colombian Joint Task Force (JTF-South), we judge it the best brigade-sized unit in the Colombian military. It has served as a brigade operations model with respect to joint operations, proper use of helicopters, intelligence-driven missions, and respect for human rights. Moreover, we dispensed enough herbicide to spray a record potential 84,000 hectares of cocaine cultivation last year, up from 58,000 in 2000, and have set a goal of 150,000 hectares in 2002.

I know there is an on-going debate about the impact of our eradication efforts on total cocaine cultivation in Colombia. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA's) Crime and Narcotics Center and ONDCP say total cocaine cultivation in Colombia increased from 136,000 to 170,000 hectares in 2001. In contrast, the Government of Colombia estimates that cocaine cultivation fell 27,000 hectares during the same period, dropping from 163,000 hectares to 136,000 hectares.. The conflicting numbers reflect the differing methodologies used. The ONDCP has asked an independent team of experts to analyze the two approaches. The U.S. is awaiting for the findings and recommendations of this panel that will determine how cocaine estimates will be done in the future.

The U.S. has also engaged in efforts to ensure the security of Colombians. Since May 2001, the U.S. has funded through Colombia's Ministry of Interior, a program that has provides protection to 1,676 Colombians whose lives were threatened, including human rights workers, labor activists, and journalists. The U.S. government-funded Early Warning System (EWS) helps alert Colombian authorities to threats of potential massacres or other human rights abuses, enabling them act to avert such incidents. To date, the EWS has issued 106 alerts and the U.S. working with non-governmental organizations and international agencies, has provided assistance to 330,000 Colombians displaced by violence since mid-2001. Our program to demobilize child soldiers has helped 272 children to re-integrate into society.

To strengthen Colombia's democracy, we have implemented programs to help the Government of Colombia reform its administration of justice and strengthen local government. We have opened eighteen Casas de Justicia, which provide cost-effective legal services to Colombians who have not previously enjoyed access to the country's judicial system. The U.S. is currently working to set up a Casa de Justicia in San Vicente de Caguan, the main urban area in the former demilitarized zone. Similarly, our program to help municipalities improve their financial management, fight corruption, and boost community participation has completed six Social Investment Fund projects in southern Colombia. The U.S. is also helping the Colombia Prosecutor General's Office set up human rights units throughout the country to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of human rights abuses.

Our alternative development program in southern Colombia has encountered difficulties but we are making adjustments to overcome the security and other constraints we face. We remain committed to alternative development.

Human Rights

Human rights concerns are a central element in our Colombia policy. In meetings with senior Colombian civilian and military officials, U.S. officials regularly stress the need for Colombia to improve its human rights performance. During my visit to Bogota last February, I emphasized to President Pastrana that the Colombian military must take additional actions to sever any links between military personnel and paramilitary forces. I also met with the leading presidential candidates and made clear our expectation that they too be fully committed to improving human rights. In late March, Curt Struble, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Scott Carpenter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, traveled to Bogota to underscore the importance we attach to human rights. Chief of Staff of the Army General Eric Shinseki and Acting CINCSOUTH Major General Gary Speer have also traveled to Colombia and delivered strong human rights messages to their counterparts in the Colombian Armed Forces.

Human rights are an essential element in most of our training programs in Colombia. The counternarcotics brigade that we trained and equipped has compiled an excellent human rights record to date. These programs are an integral part of the Government of Colombia's efforts to professionalize the Colombian military and to develop a new human rights culture within the Armed Forces. They deserve our continued support.

Our human rights message is making a difference. President Pastrana and Armed Forces Commander Tapias have repeatedly denounced collusion between elements of the Colombian military and the paramilitaries. The Colombian military captured 590 paramilitaries and killed 92 in combat last year. Eight military personnel, including two colonels and a lieutenant colonel, were charged in civilian courts with collaborating with paramilitaries or with committing gross human rights violations in 2001. A senior Colombian naval official's career has effectively ended because of allegations that he collaborated with paramilitaries.

Still, too many Colombians continue to suffer abuses by state security forces or by terrorist groups acting in collusion with state security units. Those responsible for such actions must be punished. The establishment of the rule of law and personal security for all Colombians cannot happen if human rights abuses and impunity for the perpetrators of such crimes continue to occur.

New Situation Requires New Authorities Adjustments

On February 20, President Pastrana ended the demilitarized zone and the Government of Colombia's peace talks with the FARC. The immediate catalyst for Pastrana's action was the FARC's hijacking of a civilian aircraft and its subsequent kidnapping of the President of the Peace Commission in the Colombian Senate. Pastrana's decision also reflected the FARC's stepped up attacks on military and police targets, its bombings of key economic infrastructure and its refusal to participate in good faith in peace talks after Pastrana had renewed the zone on January 20.

Since February 20, the Colombian military has reoccupied the main urban areas in the former zone, while the FARC has continued its terrorist violence. President Pastrana has announced plans to increase Colombia's defense budget to cover the cost of heightened military operations, and to add 10,000 soldiers to the army. He also requested additional military aid from the U.S. to help cope with the increased terrorist threat. This request includes the removal of the restrictions on the use of military assets provided by the U.S. for counternarcotics purposes.

Just as we supported President Pastrana's management of the peace process with the FARC, we believe it is critical that the U.S. help Colombia deal with the surge in violence that has followed the end of the demilitarized zone. We answered Pastrana's immediate request for help by providing increased intelligence support on terrorist actions, expediting the delivery of helicopter spare parts already paid for by the Government of Colombia, and assisting the Colombians with eradication activities in the former zone.

The U.S. is also acting to address the Colombian people's broader needs as they defend their democracy from terrorist violence. In the counterterrorism supplemental submitted on March 21, we are seeking new, explicit, legal authorities that would allow our assistance to Colombia, including assistance previously provided, to be used "to support a unified campaign against narcotics trafficking, terrorist activities, and other threats to its national security." These new authorities recognize that the terrorist and narcotics problems in Colombia are inextricably intertwined in their threat to Colombia's security, prosperity and democracy. If authorized, we will continue to assist Colombia's counternarcotics activities while also being able to aid their counterterrorism effort.

The new authorities will not resolve all the difficulties that Colombia faces. The military assistance we have provided to Colombia is geared toward a limited, counternarcotics mission. Expanding the authorities for the use of aircraft and other assets to cover terrorist and other threats to Colombia's democracy does not ensure that Colombia will be able to address these multiple threats in the short-term. However, if approved, they will give us the flexibility we need to help the Government of Colombia attack this hydra-headed threat more efficiently and more effectively, in the shortest possible time, with resources already in Colombia.

Our request for new authorities does not signify a retreat from our concern about human rights nor signal an ill-guided U.S. commitment in Colombia. Our proposal expressly states that we will continue to do human rights vetting of all Colombian military units receiving U.S. training or equipment and will maintain the 800 person cap on U.S. military personnel and contractors providing training and other services in Colombia.

In addition to new legal authorities, we are also seeking \$35 million in the counterterrorism supplemental to help the Colombian Government protect its citizens from kidnapping, infrastructure attacks and other terrorist actions. Our \$35 million request is broken down as follows:

- \$25 million in Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) funding for anti-kidnapping training and equipment for the Colombian police and military;
- \$6 million in Foreign Military Funds (FMF) funding for training for Colombian military units protecting the key Caño Limón oil pipeline.
- \$4 million in International Narcotics Control Law Enforcement (INCLE) funding to help organize, train, equip and deploy Colombian National Police units that will provide security for the construction of reinforced police stations to enable the police to reestablish a presence in conflicted areas.

In the longer-term, we are asking for \$439 million in INCLE funds in our fiscal year 2003 budget request to sustain our Plan Colombia programs, as well as \$98 million in foreign military financing funds to train and equip Colombian military units protecting the Caño Limón oil pipeline. The \$439 million request includes \$275 million for the Colombian military and police, and \$164 million for democracy programs, alternative development, assistance to vulnerable

groups, and promotion of the rule of law. These funds, together with the terrorism supplemental, will be crucial as the next Colombian government works to improve security, build effective democratic institutions and foster economic growth.

Peace Process

As I mentioned earlier, the U.S. government supported President Pastrana's peace efforts with the FARC. We made clear to the Government of Colombia our concerns about FARC abuse of the demilitarized zone, but maintained that management of the process was the Pastrana Administration's responsibility. I want to reiterate that despite the breakdown of the FARC process due to the FARC's bad faith, the U.S. government remains supportive of peace processes aimed at halting terrorist violence and reincorporating irregular combatants into Colombia's political, economic and social fabric. In this context, we are encouraged by the current talks between the ELN and the Government of Colombia, and hope that they will soon produce a viable, lasting peace accord.

Colombian Commitment

The U.S. is committed to helping Colombia in its fight against terrorism's assault on its democracy, prosperity and security, but Colombians must take the lead in this struggle. U.S. support will be contingent on the Government of Colombia taking the steps needed to mount an effective campaign against terror. These will include Colombian commitments to develop a national political-military strategy, boost the resources devoted to security, implement economic reforms, improve human rights protection, and sustain vigorous and effective counternarcotics programs. We have already engaged the leading Colombian presidential candidates on these issues, and will hold more intensive talks with the president-elect after Colombia's presidential elections.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, your support will be crucial in the days ahead as you discuss our proposal for new and supplemental funding request for our assistance to Colombia, as well as our fiscal year 2003 budget request. I look forward to maintaining a dialogue with you as we work together to help provide Colombia's democracy the tools it needs to build a secure, prosperous and democratic life for its citizens. The people of Colombia must not be denied the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a hemisphere united by open markets, democratic governments, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.